1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

614 earlier paragraphs (pp. 164–169); these symbols evidently represent an
[302] exclusively maternal organization into clans consecrated to sole tutelaries. The tutelaries, or totems, together with the clan names and all personal designations connected with the totems, are highly esoteric, and were not ascertained save in the few cases mentioned above.[1]

It should be observed that the identification of kindred by the alien
593 observer is difficult and somewhat uncertain, since the relationships recognized in Seri society are not equivalent to those customary among Caucasians. It was found especially difficult to identify the husband
● [582] of the jacal, partly because he is commonly incongruously younger (and hence relatively smaller) than the mistress, and partly because of the undignified position of outer guard into which he is forced by the tribal etiquette. Moreover, his connection with the house is veiled by the absence of authority over both children and domestic affairs, though he exercises such authority freely (within the customary limits) in the
[842] jacales of his female relatives. There is, indeed, some question as to the clear recognition of paternity; certainly the females have no term
601 for "my father", i. e., the term is the same as that for "my mother", *em*, though the males distinguish the maternal ancestor by a suffixed syllable (*e*="my father"; *e-ta* or *i'-tah*="my mother"), which seems to be a magnificative or an intensificative element. It is noteworthy that the kinship terminology is strikingly meager; also that while the records suggest various significant points, the material is hardly rich enough to warrant complete synthesis of the consanguineal system.

While the burden of the more permanent property pertains to the
42 women, there is a decided differentiation of labor with a concomitant vesting of certain property in the warriors—the distinctively masculine chattels comprising arrows, quivers, bows, turtle-harpoons, etc. There are indications that the balsas, too, are regarded as masculine property. The impermanent possessions—water, food, etc—seem to be the common property of men, women, and children, except in so far as the
[264] right is regulated by regimentation; for the privileges of eating and drinking are enjoyed in the order of seniority. In the reckoning of
554 seniority, the chief (who is comonly such in virtue of his position as
602 nominal elder brother of a prolific dame) ranks first, and is followed by other warriors in an order affected in an undetermined way by conjugal relations as well as by their prowess or sagacity (the equivalents of age in primitive philosophy) down to an undetermined point—apparently fixed by puberty; then comes the clanmother, followed by her daughters in the order of nominal age, which is affected by the status of spouses and the number of living offspring; finally come the children, practically in the order of their strength (which also is deemed an equivalent of age), though the girls—especially those

[121] [1] The chief object of the 1895 expedition was to pursue the inquiries concerning social organization, totems, etc.; but, as mentioned elsewhere, this object was defeated by the troublous history of the tribe during the earlier part of 1895, and the consequent revival and intensification of their animosity toward aliens.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

with the customs of the Seri), endured for many years and ending at last in unpitied death.

Collectively the cases seem to define a germ, rather than a mature custom, of adoption. In the first case a benefactor (by means regarded as magical) was formally inducted into the reigning family; in the second case the conquering hero (through what were again regarded as magical means) was less formally recognized and venerated, even worshiped, as an all-powerful shaman; while in the third case a representative of the doughtiest alien tribe was enslaved, probably with motives akin to those expressed in the carrying of chargeless guns, the making of imitation machetes, and other fetishistic devices. Except in the first instance there is no indication of consistent custom; but since the entire history of the tribe clearly contradicts regulated adoption of aliens (and indeed affords no other example), it must be inferred that any such custom is intratribal rather than intertribal.

MARRIAGE

The most striking and significant social facts discovered among the Seri relate to marriage customs.

As noted repeatedly elsewhere, the tribal population is preponderantly feminine, so that polygyny naturally prevails; the number of wives reaches three or possibly four, averaging about two, though the younger warriors commonly have but one, and there are always a number of spouseless (widowed) dames but no single men of marriageable age. So far as could be ascertained, no special formalities attend the taking of supernumerary wives, who are usually widowed sisters of the first spouse; it seems to be practically a family affair, governed by considerations of convenience rather than established regulations—an irregularity combining with other facts to suggest that polygyny is incidental, and perhaps of comparatively recent origin.

The primary mating of the Seri is attended by observances so elaborate as to show that marriage is one of the profoundest sacraments of the tribe, penetrating the innermost recesses of tribal thought, and interwoven with the essential fibers of tribal existence. Few if any other peoples devote such anxious care to their mating as do the Seri;[1] and among no other known tribe or folk is the moral aspect of conjugal union so rigorously guarded by collective action and individual devotion.

The initial movement toward formal marriage seems to be somewhat indefinite (or perhaps, rather, spontaneous); according to Mashém it may be made either by the prospective groom or else by his father, though not directly by the maiden or her kinswomen. In any event the prerequisites for the union are provisionally determined in the suitor's family; these relate to the suitability of age, the propriety of

[1] Perhaps the closest parallel to this respect is that found in the elaborate marriage regulations prevailing among the Australian aborigines, as described by Spencer and Gillen, Walter E. Roth, and other modern observers.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

584 [582] the clan relation, etc; for no stripling may seriously contemplate matrimony until he has entered manhood (apparently corresponding with the warrior class), nor can he mate in his own totem, though all other clans of the tribe are apparently open to him; while the maiden must have passed (apparently by a considerable time) her puberty feast. In any event, too, the proposal is formally conveyed by the elderwoman of the suitor's family to the maiden's clanmother, when it is duly pondered, first by this dame and her daughter matrons; and later (if the proposal is entertained) it is deliberated and discussed at length by the matrons of the two clans involved, who commonly hold repeated councils for the purpose. At an undetermined stage and to an undetermined degree the maiden herself is consulted; certainly she holds the power of veto, ostensible if not actual. Pending the deliberations the maiden receives special consideration and enjoys various dignities; if circumstances favor, her kinswomen erect a jacal for her; and even if circumstances are adverse, she is outfitted with a pelican robe of six or eight pelts and other matronly requisites. When all parties concerned are eventually satisfied a probationary marriage is arranged, and the groom leaves his clan and attaches himself to that of the bride. Two essential conditions—one of material character and the other moral—are involved in this probationary union; in the first place, the groom must become the provider for, and the protector of, the entire family of the bride, including the dependent children and such cripples and invalids as may be tolerated by the tribe—i. e., he must display and exercise skill in turtle-fishing, strength in the chase, subtlety in warfare, and all other physical qualities of competent manhood. This relation, with the attendant obligations, holds for a year, i. e., a round of the seasons. During the same period the groom shares the jacal and sleeping robe provided for the prospective matron by her kinswomen, not as privileged spouse, but merely as a protecting companion; and throughout this probationary term he is compelled to maintain continence—i. e., he must display the most indubitable proofs of moral force. During this period the always dignified position occupied by the daughter of the family culminates; she is the observed of all observers, the subject of gossip among matrons and warriors alike, the recipient of frequent tokens from designing sisters with an eye to shares of her spouse's spoils, and the receiver of material supplies measuring the competence of the would-be husband; through his energy she is enabled to dispense largess with lavish hand, and thus to dignify her clan and honor her spouse in the most effective way known to primitive life; and at the same time she enjoys the immeasurable moral stimulus of realizing that she is the arbiter of the fate of a man who becomes warrior or outcast at her bidding, and through him of the future of two clans—i. e., she is raised to a responsibility in both personal and tribal affairs which, albeit temporary, is hardly lower than that of the warrior-chief. In tribal theory the moral test measures

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1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

time they agree, she shall go along with him as betrothed, but he is not to have any knowledge of her till the utmost payment is discharged; all which is punctually observed. Thus they lie together under one covering for several months, and the woman remains the same as she was when she first came to him.[1]

This record also is peculiarly pertinent, partly in that it practically corroborates the Seri testimony, but chiefly in that it indicates definite transition toward a higher culture-plane in which the primitive material test is at least partially replaced by a commutation in goods or their equivalents.

On reducing the marital customs of the Seri to conventional terms, the more prominent features are found to be (1) strict clan exogamy and (2) absolute tribal endogamy, together with (3) theoretical or constructive monogamy, coupled with (4) vague traces of polyandry, and (5) an apparently superficial polygyny, as well as (6) total absence of purchase or capture of either spouse.

On reviewing the customs in the light of their influence on the everyday life of the tribe, certain features stand out conspicuously: (1) Perhaps the most striking feature is the collective character of the function; for while the movement originates in personal inclination on the part of the suitor and is shaped by personal inclination on the part of the maiden, all manifestations of inclination are open and public (at least to the elders of the two clans involved), while the personal sentiments on both sides are completely subordinated to the public interests of clans and tribe as weighed and decided by the matronly lawgivers and adelphiarchal administratives. Thus neither man nor maid mates for themself, but both love and move in the tribal interests and along the lines laid down by the tribal leaders. (2) As a corollary or a complement (according to the viewpoint) to the collectivity of the mating, the next most striking feature is the formal or legal aspect of the union; for the entire affair, from inception to consummation, is rigorously regulated by precedents and usages handed down from an immemorial past. Thus the roots of young affection are not destroyed but rather cultivated, though the burgeoning vine and the outreaching tendrils are trained to a social structure shaped in ages gone and kept in the olden form by unbroken tradition. (3) A collateral feature of the customs is the necessary reaction of the requirements on individual character of both groom and bride; for the would-be warrior-spouse is compelled to display high qualities of physical and moral manhood on pain of ostracism and outlawry, so that his passions of ambition and affection are at once stimulated to the highest degree, while the maiden's pride of blood and possession and her sense of regnant responsibility are fostered to the utmost. The brief preliminary courtship and the long probationary mating mark an era of intensification in two lives at their most impressionable stage; and if there be

[1] The History of Carolina, etc, by John Lawson (1714), reprint of 1860, pp. 382-383. Attention was called to this passage by Mr James Mooney.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

Society

583 Marriage is monogamous. The wife is bought, in spite of the
[595] poverty of the Seri. Santa Blanco paid 150 pesos in property for his wife. Chico Romero, a widower, paid more for his, a widow, "because she had three daughters, and a family with daughters is rich" (in expectation of bride prices).

591 The wife goes to live with the husband. A young couple lives
562 with the young man's parents, perhaps in an annex to the house. "The man commands." Chico was emphatic on this point, and repeated that when his son married he would live with him, not with the girl's relatives. Both he and Santo have step-sons-in-law as well as daughters-in-law living with them, but this is because they are chief and boat-owner respectively; (and the sons-in-law are young).

833 Copulation was said to take place immediately on marriage.
McGee's statement of a period of continence being cited as the custom of a foreign tribe, the informant obviously wondered and laughed.
[843] Intercourse goes on during pregnancy; but not for some months after birth, for fear of a new pregnancy, which would be injurious to the child. A good man respects his wife at all times and does not constantly pursue her.

144 No half-breeds were seen, and the Seri declare they are free of
164 venereal disease.

551 Nothing could be elicited from the informant as to anything like
614 the group-inherited names of lineages, or clans, of the Yuman tribes.

768 When a woman dies, the widower may give the children to his dead wife's parents to raise. This is the only item learned that might point to McGee's "matriarchate"; but the informant may have been thinking of particular cases. His son lives with him, though he lost the boy's mother.

582 Cross-cousin marriage is as prohibited as that of parallel cousins.
This is in accord with the sibling terminology for all cousins; but in view of the present small number of the tribe, the rule must work difficulty.

[587] A man does not marry his dead wife's sister. Apparently he may not. Nor is there levirate. The informant volunteered the question if marriage with step-daughters was permitted by other peoples. Being told of the Navaho custom, he seemed shocked.

606 Neither husband nor wife looks at or addresses either parent-
183 in-law. In the isolated, small-group life of the Seri, this rule can hardly be adhered to with complete rigor, and its conspicuous carrying out was not observed; but then everything in their behavior is casual, informal, and slovenly.

607 The kinship system as recorded contains a note as to a woman not addressing her younger sister's husband by kinship term except

[90 cont.]

361 population. There is an obvious separation there between the
563 Seri and the yori, or non-Seri, with manifest differences in cultural patterns.

The yori occupy an extensive area per person; their homes are quite distant from one another, and four families in conjunction occupy a belt of land of about 100 by 50 meters.

361 The Seri are grouped by families, inhabiting minute squares of from one and a half to two meters to a side. The yori
182 feeling of prestige, based on the territorial expanse of their prop-
361 erty, contrasts with the feeling of security based on personal
511 contact that dominates many aspects of Seri life; the small size of the Seri habitation indicates, not a low standard of living, but a distinct [91] concept of comfort, according to which the Seri, having all the desert to live in, like the yori, confine themselves to the limits that personal contact permits.

In January, 1952, there were 35 dwellings, with an aver-
592 age of 4.6 persons in each, those lodging four, five, and six persons frankly predominating. Each three or four more closely related families occupied contiguous homes, forming relatively separate conjunctions by themselves, which we might call
596 macrofamilies.

The family is the basic Seri institution, which is manifest in all aspects of life: it is the center of production, co-operation, the division of labor, education, diversion, government, etc.

582 Going beyond the family and macrofamily organization,
619 we have a tribal structure based on the generalized exchange (2)
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2. Lévy Strauss, Les Structures élémentaires de la Parenté [Elementary Kinship Structures], Paris, 1949.

of members for concluding marriage, by which all the Seri are actually linked by consanguinity or affinity. One is almost able to include all the members of the tribe on a single genealogical chart, systematically excluding only some few outsiders who have penetrated the group.

582 This situation, which would make one think of a primitive

[91 cont.]

582 promiscuity of gatherers corroborative of the ideas of Morgan, is very far from being simple, tending more to confirm the ideas of Kirchoff regarding the greater restriction and regulation of marital relations in societies having a rudimentary economy. In all Seri marriages close consanguineous relatives seem to be avoided. More precisely, a classification of relatives is established, from which only one group can provide a spouse. To differentiate the Seri system from clan systems and marital classes, in which each member belongs to a fixed class in relation to all the other members, in this system the classification varies with respect to the position of each person, that is to say, it is a true system of kinship. The factors of sex, polarity, generation, relative age, affinity, and consanguinity are involved in it, acting to deny or permit the possibility of marriage. Perhaps because of the small size of the Seri group, only within which are marriages concluded, the kinship system results in a clear identification of all persons by terms that are functions of marital relationships: approximately 50 per cent are excluded for being of the [92] same sex; 30 per cent for being of a distinct generation (very few aged or very young); the consanguineous relatives close to the affinal relatives and married persons are also excluded, leaving only so many persons as possible mates, a situation that is reflected in the kinship terminology.

582 [837] [836] It is not that sexual relations may be prohibited, for there is relative freedom in extramarital, including premuptial, sexual relations, but the "marriage" association, sanctioned by the society and for which there is strong community pressure, has the limitations mentioned. And it tends to be realized, in spite of the disadvantages of the disappearance of sexual liberty, avoidance of near affinal relatives, and the economic obligations that begin upon the conclusion of the marriage.

156 155 With regard to individual development, this social structure is of such nature that it has well integrated cultural elements that create a very special personality, characterized by improvidence, emotional instability, inconstancy, and feelings of security, dispossession, and dependence.

535 semi-darkness.
123 Soon two little boys joined the dance, stepping up and down in the sand. Lighted only by the flickering flames of the driftwood fires on the shores of this mysterious and dreaded isle, the soft murmur of the sea as a refrain to the wild chanting, the weird circling of glittering eyes, and wild dark faces, presented a scene of uncanny and savage fascination witnessed by white men probably for the first time.

[533] After each stanza there was a short rest. The singing was similar to most other tribal chanting.

582 836 622 Bob made the remark that the girl was old enough to be broken in by the old Chief. I said, "How?"

583 [838] He said, when a girl thirteen or fourteen has her menses, the Chief takes her and goes through the family act. This is called 'breaking her in'. She is then eligible for marriage. A young man desiring marriage has to purchase the girl by giving the father a boat or rifle, both being necessary to the Seri's existence and protection. At the wedding they have sort of a fiesta and much mescal is drunk, which properly solemnizes a wedding.

844 845 When a girl has a baby it usually comes very naturally and easily, but I remember one girl's first baby was three days in coming, and she suffered a great deal. This was on a subsequent trip. She was staying with many of her people on the mainland and someone asked them if they didn't want a doctor or other help. They said: No, they had one. It was a Medicine Man who chanted over the girl and dug hollows in the sand to fit her heels into. He said that the legs had to be kept apart. This was all he did. But ordinarily there is no trouble, and if a baby is born at noon the mother is up and doing, and cooks supper for her lord and master. The men treat their wives with kindness and each shares with the other any delicacy.

462 [383] [482] In Seriland domestic duties are reversed from the usual Indian methods. The men get the water and the women get the wood. This consists mostly of driftwood gathered along the shore, and it is a picturesque sight to see a string of women and girls bringing in loads of wood in baskets on their heads at sunset.

622 595 There are no plural marriages, but sometimes when a Chief is old, or rather when his wife is old and can have no more babies, he can take a younger woman as his wife. The present Chief is getting old now, almost too old to break in the girls, so they may get a younger man. This might be called the perquisites of office. He takes the cream.

832 825 They hunt lice in the head and eat them. This is said to increase the amorous desires. The penis of the male turtle is cut out and dried. This is pounded and pulverized and placed in the food of the women. This is said to create a desire for a man and the family act.

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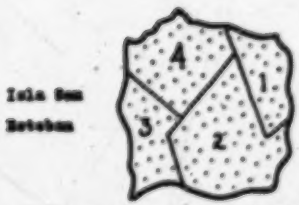

FIG. 5. Subdivisions of Band VI

BAND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

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The social structure of the bands can be properly understood only in relation to the social structure of their smaller units, the i?iziitang. The kin group which resided in and dominated each such subdivision constituted a clan.[8] This group conforms to Murdock's three major specifications for clan designation.[9]

Murdock's first specification states that a kin group, to constitute a clan, must be based explicitly on a unilinear rule of descent. The kin group of each Seri band subdivision was based on patrilineal descent. An individual was closely associated with the group of kinsmen of his subdivision, all of whom were related to him through males only. The father was the head of his household. For example, he assumed leadership in marriage negotiations. Upon his death, the eldest son took his place.

[611]
[592]

The second specification states that such a kin group must have residential unity. Seri marriages were exogamous with respect to the subdivision,[7] and the rule of residence was patrilocal. The domicile was set up near the home of the groom's parents.

[582]
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Except for the occurrence of several battles, relations between Bands I and III were peaceful.

Relations with non-Seri groups were not always peaceful. For many years the members of Band I were on friendly terms with the Papago; they often camped together and even intermarried. Due to a misunderstanding,[10] fighting erupted between the two groups and many people were killed in the years which followed.

Band II

The external relations of Band II were decidedly turbulent. Although their primary base of operations was a coastal area, the people did not use the ocean as a source of food. They preferred beef and horse meat which was easily acquired by stealing animals from ranches. Here again the wrath of the ranchers and the government was incurred.

A small group of Yaqui eventually joined Band II and intermarried with them. The Seri claim that the Yaqui induced the warriors of this band to assault travelers on the road between Hermosillo and Guaymas. Coyote Iguana, who according to Seri tradition captured Lola Casanova, was of this band. This activity soon brought retribution from the government. Later, dissension arose between these Seri and the Yaqui.

The enmity and strife that occurred between Bands II and V were mentioned above.

Band III

The history of the internal relations of this band on Tiburon Island seems to have been marked by periods of violence. Battles between subdivisions sometimes occurred; however, they were usually short-lived and soon forgotten. A major struggle once occurred when a shaman named *?apetla* "the invincible one" and warriors from subdivision 4 made repeated raids upon the neighboring subdivisions and killed many. Eventually, his enemies overcame their fear and destroyed the killer.

Although the inhabitants of Band III were hunters, gatherers, and fishermen, they began to rob cattle once they became established on the mainland. They too incurred the wrath of ranchers and the government.

Band IV

Since the members of this band were, by choice, inhabiting an inland area of Tiburon Island, they lived in relative isolation as hunters and gatherers. Their primary contacts were with members of Band III with whom they intermarried.

BAND V

642 These people were apparently hunters, gatherers, and fishermen. It is said that they speared fish from the shore since they [226] [501] [721] did not use balsas. They too apparently raided the ranches. Their warring nature has already been discussed; it resulted in the [582] [628] acquisition of few friends. However, several marriages between members of this band and members of subdivision 2 of Band III are said to have occurred.

BAND VI

[131] [347] [501] [411] [762] The members of Band VI lived on San Esteban Island and were the most primitive of the tribe. They lived in huts made of driftwood and in caves and made extensive use of the balsa. Although they did not have the bow and arrow, they did become expert in the use of the spear. The people depended mainly on a seafood, iguana, and maguey diet.

621 628 578 [157] Perhaps it was due to the confined living space on the small island with the accompanying lack of fresh water that relations between the four subdivisions were precarious and fights broke out frequently. The Seri today stress the fact that the members of this band were impetuous and unpredictable.

642 [574] [628] Their relations with the other bands were generally good however. Seri from Band III were free to visit San Esteban where they were well treated.

[484] [191] [648] The San Esteban people seldom traveled to the mainland, and, since they spoke no Spanish, it is probable that they made no peaceful contact with non-Seri groups.

642 628 578 648 COLLAPSE OF THE BAND SYSTEM

Internal strife in the Seri tribe was probably a major factor in the establishment of the band system. External strife was a major factor in its downfall.

[021] Reference has been made to the plundering, killings and rustling of cattle to which certain of the bands were dedicated. The concern of the Sonora government was aroused, and steps were taken to crush the rebellious groups. According to the present-day Seri, military action by army units and rancher outfits against the various bands resulted in the near-destruction of the whole tribe.[11]